



# GULL

BULLETIN

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NUMBER 9

**SEPTEMBER MEETING:** The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 8th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Palace Hotel, Market and Montgomery Sts., San Francisco. Location of meeting room will be posted on Bulletin Board in lobby, near office desk.

Dr. Joseph Grinnell, Honorary Member of the Association, will deliver an address on "A Westerner's Impressions of Eastern Birds and Bird People."



**SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP** will be taken on Sunday, Sept. 18th, to the Bay Shore at Lincoln Park, Alameda, with a possible extension to the flats westwardly from Bay Farm Bridge, depending upon circumstances. San Francisco members will take Southern Pacific ferry leaving at 11:45 a. m., and either north side or south side train to Lincoln Park Station, where the party will form at 12:30 p. m. Bring lunch and container for water which may be obtained at the park. East Bay members may reach the park by Southern Pacific street cars leaving 14th and Franklin Sts. at 11:52 or 12:05; or, otherwise by Traction car line No. 1, passing around loop at Oakland City Hall and running thence down San Pablo Ave. and Broadway to Alameda. This car runs to the entrance of Lincoln Park, requiring about forty-five minutes for the trip from Oakland.

The change in date has been occasioned by the three-day holiday which laps the usual date, and this postponement precludes a trip to the grounds of the gun club at Baumberg, where we would be unwelcome during the preparations for the autumn shooting season. Leader, Mrs. G. E. Kelly.



**PROCEEDING OF THE AUGUST MEETING:** The fifty-fifth regular meeting of the Association was held on August 11th, in the rooms of the Engineers' Club, Mechanics Institute Building, with President Kibbe in the chair; Miss Ames, Recording Secretary; fourteen members and four guests in attendance.

Little or no business was transacted, and brief reference was made to the matter of place of meeting. The interchange of vacation experiences was opened by Mrs. Reygadas, who detailed her bird work during a two-months' sojourn in the Yosemite National Park, illustrated as well by an album replete with interesting photographs of birds, nests and flowers. Miss Baily carried off honors for varieties observed, with a record of more than one hundred species. Only one or two of those present had been so unfortunate as to have no new experiences to report.

In the course of the evening, Mrs. Burke exhibited a most remarkable belt of Peruvian Indian workmanship; consisting of a coarse fabric interwoven with hard, ornamental seeds, and decorated with the dried bodies of some eighteen or twenty birds of incredibly beautiful plumage, hung around the belt. The use of this must have been confined strictly to high ceremonial occasions, for it is as delicate as the pendent bodies are beautiful.

So interested was everyone that the meeting was adjourned only by the imminent suspension of the elevator service.

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THE QUESTION OF REGULAR PLACE OF MEETING has not yet been satisfactorily settled, but a number of suggestions have been received quite lately and are now receiving attention. Owing to a misunderstanding, it became necessary to change the proposed location at the last minute, thus unavoidably delaying the present issue of THE GULL.

Thus each of the two three-day holidays has done its share to complicate our September program, as it has been all but impossible to make any arrangements of a business nature since Friday last. It is feared that some members will miss their meeting notices through lack of proper advice as to changes in address. An exceptionally large number of "GULLS" was returned to the mailing committee in August. Our members should remember that *only first class mail matter* is forwarded by the post office, without additional postage stamps attached in advance. Therefore, when THE GULL is improperly addressed, another stamp must be placed on the envelope or it will not be forwarded, but, after several days delay, will be returned to Mrs. Smith. When this happens, no one knows what to do in the matter of sending the next number. If you have failed to receive THE GULL regularly, please note that in all probability, the fault lies with yourself, and you will help everyone concerned by promptly notifying Mrs. Carl R. Smith, 563 Forty-second Ave., San Francisco, of any error in address, or intended change of address.

Apart from the above, we shall all hope that a regular place of meeting may soon be adopted, so that the non-receipt of notice in advance will not interfere with attendance at the meetings.



## THE LURE OF BIRD STUDY

A gentleman who had spent a goodly proportion of an afternoon, trailing in the wake of three bird-loving friends, who were tirelessly watching for, observing and enumerating every bird that came into view, finally gave voice to his astonishment that they could find such constant pleasure in the study of birds with which each of them was familiar. He remarked: "As I walk along, one of you gives subdued warning,—'There is one! Under the bushes, fifty feet ahead, at the right.' Then you all tiptoe along, and I follow, and we finally see, what? A spurred towhee! Or, maybe, a wren-tit! We have all been looking at them for ten years or more. I cannot understand it."

The English naturalist, William H. Hudson, who has spent so many happy years in close and sympathetic contact with the wonders of the out-of-doors, and who is blest with the knack of communicating so much of his own sense of enjoyment in his delightful essays on this subject, illustrates the situation and indirectly gives the answer to the foregoing, in one of his fascinating volumes, thus:

"The people who discover birds are now common with us, and though the story of their discoveries is somewhat boring, it amuses at the same time. A lady of your acquaintance tells you the result of putting some crumbs on a window-sill—the sudden appearance to feed on the crumbs of a quaint, fairy-like little bird which was not a sparrow, nor robin, nor any of those common ones, but a sparkling lively little creature with a crest, all blue above and yellow beneath—very beautiful to look at, and fantastic in its actions. A bird she has never seen before though all her life has been passed in the country. Was it some rare visitor from a distant land, where birds have a brighter plumage and livelier habits than ours?"

"Two or three years ago a literary friend wrote to me from the north of England, where he had gone for a holiday and was staying at a farm, to say that he wished me there, if only to see a wonderful bird that visited the house every day. It was probably a species, he thought, confined to that part of the country, and perhaps never seen in the south, and he wanted very much



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to know what it was. As I couldn't go to him he would try to describe it. Every morning after breakfast, when he and his people fed the birds on the lawn, this strange species, to the number of a dozen or more, would appear on the scene—a bird about the size of a thrush with a long sharp yellow beak, the entire plumage of a very dark purple and green color, so glossy that it sparkled like silver in the sunshine. They were also sprinkled all over with minute white and cream-colored spots. A beautiful bird, and very curious in its behavior. They would dart down on the scraps, scattering the sparrows right and left, quarreling among themselves over the best pieces; and then, when satisfied, they would fly up to the roof and climb and flit over the tiles and on the chimneys, puffing their feathers out and making all sorts of odd noises—whistling, chattering, tinkling, and so on."

"I replied that the birds were starlings, and he was rather unhappy about it, since he had known the starling as a common bird all his life, and had imagined he knew it too well to take it for a strange and rare species. But then, he confessed, he had never looked closely at it; he had seen it in flocks in the pastures, always at a distance, where it looks plain black."

"If the lady who discovered the blue-tit, or nun, and my friend who found out the starling, would extend their researches in the feathered world they would find a hundred other species as beautiful in coloring and delightful in their ways as those two, and some even more so."

"Much, too, might be said on the subject of many books being written about birds. They are not necessarily repetitions. \* \* \* We may put them again and again in books without experiencing any diminution in our feelings towards them. On the contrary, after doing our best we no sooner look again on the originals than we see how bad the portrait is, and would be glad to put it out of sight and forget all about it. This lustre, this peculiar grace, this expression which I never marked before, is not the picture I have made; come, let me try again, though it be but to fail again, to produce yet another painting fit only for the lumber-room."

One of our fellow members once stopped at a ranch some distance north of the Bay, and asked permission to explore a promising bit of habitat. The owner cheerfully accorded his consent, but accompanied it with the remark that nothing but a few sparrows would be found there. Our friend spent two or three hours on the ground and came away with a list of some forty species!

Two other members, a year ago, encountered a porcupine making its way about at its own leisurely gait. True, it was nearly twilight, but everything appeared in natural colors. Both saw it from the same direction and at the same distance, perhaps thirty feet away. Nevertheless they have not yet been able to agree whether that porcupine was iron-gray or a tawny roan in color.

In THE GULL for December, 1919, Mr. Joseph Mailliard made a "Plea for Greater Accuracy" in descriptions of unknown birds observed, and this is assuredly a consummation devoutly to be sought, but in most instances, the trouble seems to lie in the fact that one cannot often define to himself all the points to be observed, nor can he insure to himself the necessary time and the proper location in which to note them. Even after considerable experience, an observer noting a strange bird is susceptible to something very like "buck fever" and more often than not, the object of his solicitude takes flight for parts unknown with some very essential factors undetermined.

To the non-collecting observer the study of birds and their field identification is at once baffling and alluring. No matter how often one sees a bird of a certain species, the next encounter may develop some new phase or characteristic. When a botanical student has collected and identified a certain flower or tree specimen, he may thereafter encounter a field full of like

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plants. If he returns at the proper season, he will find another field full, and specimens may be had for the picking. But with birds, the story is different. In many cases, there will be five different phases for each species, and until each of these has been observed, he is not familiar with it. He has no control over the appearance or the actions or the location of his objective, but must take things pretty much as he finds them. And following the study of generic and specific characteristics comes the opening up of the limitless field of individuality in appearance and conduct.

The study of birds, then, will bring to us whatsoever we choose to take out of it,—fascinating, intricate, problems, an hour's delight or a life work. It will demonstrate our fallibility, test our skill and patience, develop our powers of observation and interpretation, broaden our understanding and deepen our enjoyment of life. Further quoting Mr. Hudson, "It does not need a naturalist, nor an artist, nor a poet to appreciate and be the better for that best thing in a wild bird, that free, joyous joy-giving nature felt by every one of us. The sight of a wild, free, happy existence, as far as the fairies or angels from ours, yet linked to us by its warm red blood, its throbbing human-shaped heart, fine senses, and intelligent mind, emotions that sway it as ours sway us. A relative, a 'little sister,' but clothed for its glory and joy in feathers that are as hard as flint, light as air and translucent, and wings to lift it above the earth on which we walk. Is there on earth a human being who has not felt this? Not one!"



**AUGUST FIELD TRIP** was taken on Sunday, the 14th, to Fairfax and the Cascades, in Marin County. The weather was beautiful, a trifle warm, perhaps, but rather a welcome warmth to nearly all those present.

The Bolinas road was followed to Cascades Park and then the way led through the park almost to the head of the canyon, where lunch was enjoyed. After lunch, a few of the party climbed the hill to the saddle east of White Hill, where last year's trip was summarily ended by the dense fog, but where an enchanting view greeted us this time.

Strange to say, the birds were few and far between. However, these are the ones found on the trip: On the bay, a western grebe, California murre, western, California and Heermann gulls; Brandt cormorants, great blue herons, sandpipers and a kingfisher. On land, Anthony green heron, California quail, turkey vulture, flicker and Allen hummer; California jay, western flycatcher, crow, meadowlark and linnet; green-backed goldfinch, Nuttall sparrow, junco and song sparrow; San Francisco and California towhees, Hutton vireo, lutescent warblers and Vigors wren; chickadee, bush-tit and wren-tit. Thirty-one species in all.

Mrs. Houtz, a guest; Mrs. Kelly, Mrs. Warrington, the Misses Ames, Baily and Chapin; Messrs. Kibbe, Rapp and Thomas, made the trip. Eight members and one guest.

HILDA M. BAILY.

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### AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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